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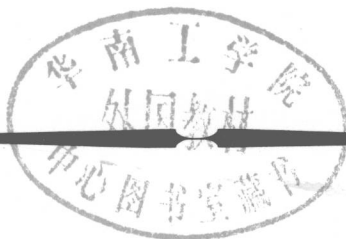
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# ACCOUNTABILITY IN EDUCATION



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CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

FIRST EDITION



petrocelli  
books

NEW YORK 1974

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Published simultaneously in the United Kingdom by Mason & Lipscomb Publishers,  
Inc., London, England.

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First printing

Printed in the United States of America

### Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Barbee, David E

Accountability in education.

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Educational accountability. I. Bouck, Aubrey J.,  
1914- joint author. II. Title.

LB2806.B29 379'.15

74-4481

ISBN 0-88405-065-3

7962736

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In particular we wish to thank Dr. William Motzel for his insightful comments on the original manuscript, as well as Dr. Frank Pesci, Dr. Roland Goddu, Richard Lee, Byron Lewis, Arthur P. Ludka, William Minchow, L. John Isselhardt, and MacDonald Knight for their critiques.

To Mrs. Polly Gray, our right arm, who typed and edited the many drafts, goes our sincere appreciation.

We wish to thank our wives and families for their patience during the writing and rewriting of the book. Thank you Phyllis and Mary, and Mark, Mike, Midgie, and John Eric.

Finally we wish to thank the following individuals and institutions for permission to reprint quotations from previously published works:

American Educational Research Assoc., for John Goodlad, "Curriculum: State of the Field." *AERA Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 39, No. 3, June 3, 1969.

Educational Technology, for William Deterline, "Applied Accountability." *Educational Technology*, January 1971, p. 17.

William J. Emerson, Superintendent of the Oakland Schools, Pontiac, Michigan, for "Instructional Accountability System," 1972, "PACER," 1970, and "School Management Technology in Oakland County, Mich.," 1972.

Center for the Study of Evaluation, for "Instructional Objectives Exchange." Learning Research and Development Center, University of Pittsburgh, for illustration of Teacher Function.

Fearon Publishers, division of Lear Siegler, Inc., for Robert Mager, *Developing Attitude toward Learning*. Belmont, Cal.: 1968.

Phi Delta Kappa and Henry S. Dyer, for Dyer's "Toward Objective Criteria of Professional Accountability in the Schools of New York City." *Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 52, No. 4, December 1970, p. 207.

Phi Delta Kappa and B. Keith Rose, Director, Northern California Program Development Center, for *Administrator's Manual—Educational Goals and Objectives: a model program for community and professional involvement*. Butte County Schools, Chico, Calif., Title III, ESEA (PL 89-10), Section 305.

Random House, Inc., for Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*. New York: 1970.

# INTRODUCTION

“Educational accountability” is becoming a household phrase today. Educators have climbed on the bandwagon, and millions of federal educational dollars have been committed. Despite all of this activity, though, educational accountability is still largely a misunderstood concept.

There is a story of an old miner who was hired by a local shopkeeper to work his claim. He was paid a small salary and given an expense account for operating the mine. At the end of a year of fruitless effort the old fellow returned to town and tied his mule to the hitching post outside his boss's store. After entering the shop and exchanging greetings with the shopkeeper, he was asked how many loads of ore he had shipped. He replied, “None.” Unsettled, but still fairly calm, the shopkeeper asked for an accounting of the miner's expenses, whereupon the old fellow thrust both hands deep into his pockets and produced a single well-worn gold piece and the words, “What I ain't got I spent.”

For many years in education we practiced a “what-I-ain't-got-I-spent” fiscal policy. Then we became fiscally responsible by accounting for all expenditures, from a \$1,500 snowplow to 1,000 volumes for the school library, from a teacher salary of \$4,500 to the addition of a contract bus for carrying students. But something was still missing. The shopkeeper in the story was hoping for a return on his investment in the form of ore being

shipped to the smelter. The public, like the shopkeeper, is also looking for a return on its investment, not just how the money was spent. The return being sought is not as immediately translatable into dollars as are shipments of ore to a smelter. In this case the return is an "educated" human being—a person who has learned how to learn efficiently and effectively. Learning is the measurable product of our educational enterprise, and if we do not produce it perhaps we should be horsewhipped as the old miner was and run out of town.

Accountability seems to be a product of our age. It is long overdue. As the costs of goods and services seem to be accelerating at a geometric rate, the public is becoming increasingly aware of what a dollar will or will not buy and is beginning to demand a "bigger bang for the buck." Hospital and medical care, education, legal services, government, and just about every other area of activity are being brought to account for the dollars invested in them.

Accountability is coming to mean an accounting of costs as they relate to the product produced. In education this product is the learned student.

The question that the public is legitimately asking is what are we getting for our education dollar and how can we get more. Schools in most cases simply do not have this cost information in a form that makes it possible to relate investment to outcome. Nor do many schools know exactly what they are producing as a product that may be related to costs. Costs do not only refer to dollar costs but to social and political costs as well.

The accountability movement is here to stay. We view it as an opportunity for the educator to acquire a powerful technology to serve the ends of his enterprise—the active lifetime learner.

It is our intention in this book to present a clear image of accountability, together with some of the available ways and means for our readers to implement the concept.

Accountability is neither performance contracting nor the voucher system, so we do not deal with those concepts here. Rather we focus on the conditions that must exist within any educational system in order for that system to be accountable for the achievement of its goals, which are centered on student learning.

It is important to emphasize that the purpose of establishing a system of accountability is to provide data and a means for effecting system modification—not to lay blame on any teacher, principal, counselor, or other responsible person in the school. As William Deterline has said, "It would be a mistake to attempt to impose accountability within the existing system of information-oriented instruction, when it would be, in effect, nothing more than a punitive structure."<sup>1</sup>



## THE FIVE CONDITIONS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to move the school from an information-passing institution to one that is responsible for learning, certain conditions must be present. There are five such conditions:

1. The goals and objectives of the school are known.
2. The school has the ways and means for measuring the attainment of its goals (and objectives).
3. The school has a system that can deliver on a continuing basis a learning-characteristics profile on each of its students.
4. The school has a cost-accounting system and a resource-distribution system that relate costs and resources to the outcomes that the school is producing.
5. The school has a procedure for making modifications in its program based upon data concerning the attainment or nonattainment of outcomes.

## HOW THE BOOK IS ORGANIZED

We have written this book for the layman as well as the educator, in that both have jobs to do in establishing the conditions necessary for accountability.

In addition to describing each of the five conditions requisite to accountability, we explain how a school can establish the conditions if they do not already exist. Whether the school is a public school, community college, or university makes little difference—the same conditions apply.

The book is organized so that you may begin with any chapter and read only those parts valuable to you and applicable to your own situation. Each of the first five chapters is devoted to one of the five conditions for accountability: Chapter 1 covers Condition 1, Chapter 2 covers Condition 2, and so forth. Chapter 6 describes use of the systems approach with regard to educational accountability. Chapter 7 details an application of this approach. Each of the seven chapters ends with some review questions and suggested activities.

## DETERMINING THE EXISTENCE OF EACH CONDITION

In order to determine whether or not each of the five conditions exists in a school, it is useful to ask—and answer—the following series of questions

about each condition. Any negative answer means that the specific condition does not exist.

The questions to ask about Condition 1 (the goals and objectives are known) are as follows:

1. Are the goals of the school written down?
2. Have these goals been translated in writing into objectives—that is, the outcomes that are expected? For example all students graduating from the school must
  - be able to read at a vocabulary level of 9.0 with 90 percent comprehension at 300 words per minute on nontechnical material
  - be able to type 35 words per minute, with less than five errors, on a five-minute timed writing test
  - be able to play at least five carryover-type sports
  - be able to really understand the following concepts in political science: balance of power, etc.
3. Have the measurement criteria for each of the objectives been established? For example what will be accepted as evidence that the student is really understanding a concept?

The questions to ask about Condition 2 (attainment of the goals and objectives can be measured) are as follows:

1. Have measurement instruments been identified or developed to measure attainment of the objectives, that is, does the school have the instruments to enable it to know that each graduating student has met the criteria established by the objectives?
2. Have instruments been identified or developed that will enable the school to know at grade levels 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. (or some other checkpoints) that students are progressing toward attainment of the objectives? Have the instruments been validated; i.e., do they measure what they are supposed to measure?
3. Are there instruments available to measure attainment of the subobjectives contained in each of the lessons that form the units and make up the courses of the school? Are these tests criterion-referenced and validated; that is, do they measure up to a standard and do they measure what they are supposed to measure?

The questions to ask about Condition 3 (the school has a system that can deliver on a continuing basis a learning-characteristics profile on each of its students) are as follows:

1. Does the school have the instruments necessary to assess the reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills of the students on a continuing basis? Are these assessments presently being performed?
2. Does the school have procedures for determining the motivational

characteristics of its students? Is such a determination being made on a regular basis?

3. Are there procedures for assessing the learning styles of each student? Are these assessments being made on a regular basis?
4. Is the information derived from the above three sets of questions being used in selecting or developing learning experiences for use by the teachers?
5. Are the teachers using the information to write learning prescriptions for their students?

The questions to ask about Condition 4 (the school has a cost-accounting system and a resource-distribution system that relate costs and resources to the outcomes that the school is producing) are as follows:

1. Does the school have a cost-accounting system and a resource-distribution system that relate costs and resources to the outcomes that the school is producing?
2. Are the systems functioning?

The questions to ask about Condition 5 (the school has a procedure for making modifications in the program based upon data concerning the attainment or nonattainment of outcomes) are as follows:

1. Does the school have a procedure for making modifications in its system based upon data concerning the attainment or nonattainment of outcomes?
2. Are these procedures being used in modifying its program?
3. Are resources being allocated or reallocated based upon attainment of objectives and goals?



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# CONDITION 1: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES